AIM

THE BULLETIN OF THE AMERICAN INDEPENDENT MOVEMENT

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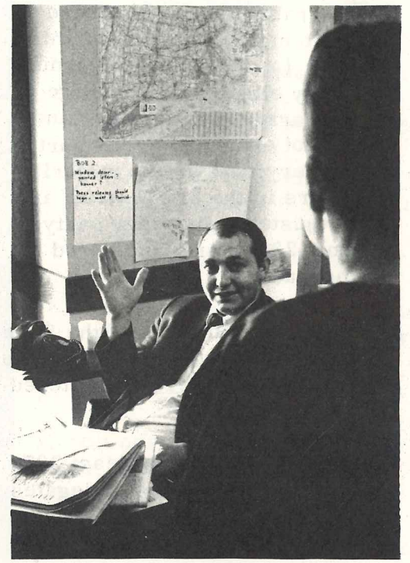
ROBERT ZELLNER: CAMPAIGN MANAGER

by Ron Kirshman

The manager of the Cook for Congress Campaign is Robert Zellner. From the fall of 1963 to last November, Bob studied sociology in the Graduate School at Brandeis University. While there he took time off to debate Governor Wallace when he spoke at the Harvard Law School, as well as to campaign against him in Indiana and Maryland during the Democratic primaries in 1964. After leaving Brandeis, Bob returned to the South to do research on Alabama politics for the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

Bob is most often identified with SNCC, having served as its first white Field Secretary and as a member of the Executive Board. The experiences of his father, a Methodist minister in Alabama, and his own as a student at Huntingdon College in Montgomery brought him to SNCC in the first place. By the time he received his B. A. degree in 1961, he had made a decision to work for SNCC and for change in the South. He has organized and participated in sit-ins, marches and other SNCC projects.



This commitment has cost him. He was the only white to march in the first street demonstration in the state of Mississippi, held in McComb on October 4, 1961. While being held by the police chief on the steps of City Hall, Bob was beaten and kicked by a mob of whites. In the spring of 1963, Bob Zellner and nine others began a march from Chattanooga to Jackson, continuing the pilgrimage of William Moore, the Baltimore postman who had been murdered while walking along the highway. The group was arrested by Public Safety Director Al Lingo at the Alabama line, and Bob and his companions spent a month on death row in Kilbie prison. Recently, on a march in Boston, policemen objecting to his activities beat him severely: "The worst beating of my life."

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THE PRINCE STREET SCHOOL AFFAIR

The Hill Parents Association (H. P. A.) was the name chosen by the handful of parents who started it all. Their outrage at conditions at Prince was aggravated by the inability or unwillingness of the Prince principal to welcome parents' interest and concern. They held Principal Charles O'Hara responsible for this lack of communication and for the conditions at Prince. H. P. A. considered his removal as the necessary preliminary to any discussion of school problems with the Board of Education.

Over the past few weeks, the Prince Street School in New Haven -- an 80% Negro elementary school in the Hill Section -- was the center of a moving and symbolic drama. Angry and determined parents organized themselves, informed other Prince parents and carried out a plan of action to achieve their demands. After the events described below, the Board of Education completely agreed to meet their immediate demand by securing the permanent withdrawal of the school principal. Conditions at the school cited by the parents included:

no library
no full time nurse
non-integrated textbooks
printed in the 1930's -- and
too few of them

Cont. -- Page 4

AIM

Editorial Staff
John Sinisi
Jon Johanning
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The campaign publication of the Independent Political Action Committee
will be published every two weeks.
Letters to the editor are invited. Please keep them short and send them to:
AIM Editor
IPAC
241 Orange Street
New Haven.
Individuals or groups not now receiving AIM are invited to add their names to our mailing list.
Write to the editor or call 787-0123.

ZELLNER CONT.

Bob brings to this campaign years of experience, a certain spirit and the determination shown in his remark that "In order to create a truly free nation, the movement, spirit and power of the fight in the South can and will be brought forth here!"

With his wife, Dottie, and daughter Margaret Rachel, Bob now lives in New Haven.

AIM MEMBERSHIP

Elsewhere in this issue of AIM is a coupon with which readers may apply for Cook for Congress Campaign membership cards. The membership contributions are only a small part of the fund raising program being planned for the campaign. Already we have received several contributions of over $100. Readers are encouraged to send in contributions of any amount as soon as possible, to meet the growing costs of the campaign: office rent and supplies, mailings, telephone, advertising in the mass media, etc.

Membership card sales should be considered as a supplement to regular fund raising activities. The membership contributions are modest and well within the means of every reader. Every member of the family should carry one with pride. We would like to report 100% response to the card sales in the next issue of AIM. Only YOU can make that possible.

WHY RUN INDEPENDENT?

Many people have asked why Robert Cook plans to campaign on an independent ticket rather than run in the 3rd District Democratic Primary. There are two major reasons for this choice: (a) state laws governing primary elections discourage intra-party challenges by candidates not endorsed by the party machinery; and (b) the majority of voters in the 3rd District are not registered in either party -- only 23.5% are registered Democrats.

A) The Election Laws of the State of Connecticut specify that before Robert Cook can even be entered in the primary vote:

1) He must obtain at least 20% of a roll-call vote of delegates to the district Democratic convention.* These delegates are chosen by the local Democratic town committee.

2) He must obtain 2,000 petition signatures of registered Democrats in the 3rd District. Only two weeks are allowed for the circulation of these petitions and they can be circulated only by registered Democrats.**

3) He must deposit $1,500 (5% of the salary of a Congressman) with the secretary of state.*** This deposit is returned only if Robert Cook receives more than 15% of the primary vote.****

By comparison, in New York and Massachusetts entering a Primary requires only a petition with names from the rolls of registered Democrats or registered independents. There is neither a district convention, nor need for any formal endorsement by party officials, nor a deposit required.

Clearly Connecticut laws are designed to discourage from running anyone but the candidate picked by the party officials. Only a concerted effort of many years might enable Robert Cook to obtain a 20% vote of delegates to the district Democratic convention. There would still remain the difficulty of obtaining 2,000 Democratic signatures within two weeks, as well as the possible forfeit of $1,500.

B) There are 223,006 registered voters***** in the 3rd District: 46,073 (approximately 20.5%) are registered Republicans and 52,485 (approximately 23.5%) are registered Democrats.

The primary battle would be a political fight involving intraparty maneuvering and pressure and directed to only 23.5% of the electorate. Thus, the major effort to bring the urgent issues up before all the voters of the 3rd District would be needlessly limited.

In some instances, it is clearly advantageous to wage a primary fight and campaign as an independent candidate only if the primary battle is lost. In Connecticut, the Election Laws governing primaries make entrance into the primary almost impossible and the indirectness of this process negates a basic purpose of the campaign.

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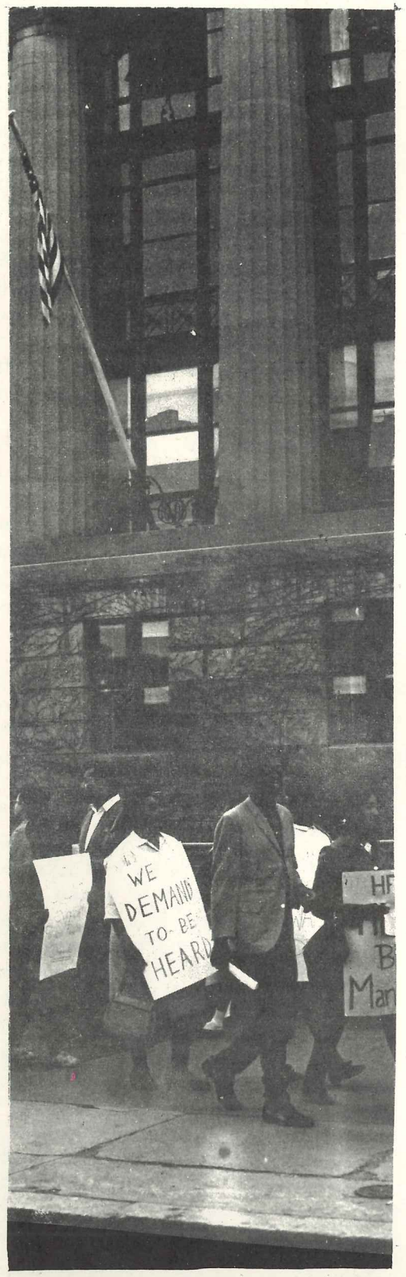
*Election Laws, Conn. Sect. 9-400.
**Election Laws, Conn. Sect. 9-400.
***Election Laws, Conn. Sect. 9-400.
****Election Laws, Conn. Sect. 9-404.
*****Register & Manual, Conn., 1965.

PRINCE SCHOOL, cont.



Members of the Hill Parents Association demonstrate outside the Hall of Records

no psychological assistance
no Spanish teacher for the growing number of Spanish-speaking children
physical education once every two weeks at the most
no permanent equipment (swings, etc.) in the playground
glass and holes in the playground pavement
filthy floors and windows, broken windows, broken doors
uncovered radiators -- particularly dangerous in the gymnasium, where they can bruise as well as burn children
only three PTA meetings in seven months (one per month is normal)
no kitchen; no hot water available
a milk program so organized that a child unable to pay went without milk
and many, many others.

Conditions of inadequate supplies, services and overall administration have existed for years at the Prince Street School. The Board of Education, the Mayor and Community Progress Inc. knew all about it. Nothing was done. Between the rhetoric of the "new" New Haven and the reality of people's lives lay an unbridgeable gap. To bridge this gap the parents pressed their actions.

Briefly, the original group of parents last winter conducted a campaign by sending complaints to the Board of Education. No answer was ever received to their eighty letters. The parents visited Board members, received promises, but obtained no action. Simultaneously, teachers at Prince also complained through their superiors but got no results. As news of both actions trickled throughout the school system, tensions mounted. This was the background to the rapid flow of events in the past weeks.

One Sunday in April, a meeting attended by 70-80 Prince parents adopted a list of twenty-five major grievances. The parents presented them publicly and declared their intention to picket Prince School until they saw evidence of major improvements. The first and absolutely essential precondition for a cessation of picketing was the ouster of Principal O'Hara. The following Monday, pickets appeared at Prince. Mr. O'Hara did not. It was announced that a Mr. Twyman, Principal of the Abraham Lincoln School, was taking over part time temporarily to "help matters out" at Prince. Mr. Twyman is a Negro.

Perhaps the Board supposed that a Negro face might placate the parents. If so, the Board made its second grave mistake. The first had been simply to permit such conditions in the school. The parents, now formally the H.P.A., angrily responded by demanding O'Hara's removal and the appointment of someone with permanent responsibility with whom they could discuss all the changes specified. They would not deal with a part-time, temporary assistant and they resented the implications of the choice of Twyman.

Throughout the week of April 18-22, picketing of the Prince School continued. On Thursday, April 21, a tense, nearly explosive PTA meeting was held. There, a spectacle was played out from which the parents drew many lessons. Officials from City departments, CPI personnel and Hill politicians were present. Their main sentiment was nervous agitation at what they viewed with alarm as a bid by rebellious parents to take over the Prince PTA. In ways both subtle and crude, they manipulated and disrupted the meeting. Little was accomplished and a number of parents left in sheer disgust.

CIVIL RIGHTS 1966: WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

A Citizens' Committee reported in May its findings on the causes of a riot at Glen Echo Amusement Park (Washington, D. C.) on Easter Monday. The report blamed the Washington Transit Company, and the managers of the Park, and the "community at large." The management had unexpectedly shut the Park at 6 P.M.; people were turned away, unable to redeem their purchased tickets. The increasingly angry crowd then discovered no buses available to take them back to the city. The buses, according to the report, refused to operate without police protection.

The explosion that followed filled every television screen across the country. Thousands of young people, mostly Negroes, threw bottles and stones, wrecked cars, and bashed heads (mostly their own), quickly labeled the Glen Echo events, like Watts, as "hoodlumism" and with a few clenched fists and black people continue to get turned out and find no place to go. This is Civil Rights 1966.

By now emotions have been worn thin by grievances suffered too long. More important, awareness among black people grows fast that "America," as reality and as promise, is not tuned in to their human rights and needs. Black people are refusing to listen to the public and private bearers of assistance who so easily promise "more to come, if you be patient."

Patience is no longer a virtue, but a well worn cliche.

For these reasons Glen Echo was as much a Negro protest as his treatment as was Watts, and Watts as much as Selma. To shudder and say "No" is, I believe, to fail to understand the lives and emotions of today's "centercity" dwellers. It is to misunderstand what repeated frustration does to the cotton picker automated out of his job, or the young mother separated from her husband and put on welfare. All this is Civil Rights, 1966.

The goal then of any Civil Rights Movement must be to harness this anger; this emotion which seeks a way out. Somebody once said that the thing people have to do is "get smart, not mad." In the long run this is true. The key to changing lives must be effective political organizing, people acting to bring under their control the decisions that affect their lives, by gaining power together.

How can this be done? The anger and frustration are healthy, for they bring the weariness spoken of before. The difference between what is and what ought to be is no longer bearable. What people must do is find the best way to strike back at what causes their pain and suffering is to organize into independent neighborhood political organizations, as a New Haven group has done.

The Hill Parents Association is a group of parents, disgusted over conditions in the Prince School. They recognized that Mayor Lee says and does two different things. They got together, and through a sustained effort attained their objectives. (See accompanying article on the conditions at Prince, and the activities pursued by the group.) The key to their success is that they are acting themselves. Their leaders were from the community. Their entire plan of action was put forward by the parents themselves.

This has to be the wave of the future: people must see in doing that the real power in being mad is the desire, ability and determination it produces to sustain long and short term political drives.

In the meantime what can the "rest of society" do to help? There is no one who cannot do something. Money is needed to pay local organizers. Publicity is necessary for safety (especially in the South). Pressure can be put on elected officials and people are needed in places of power to help soften the opposition to the independent mass movements. This is another purpose in running an independent candidate for Congress.

But most important the great liberal sector of society, known as the "majority," ought to realize what is going on. There is nothing more American than trying to wrestle with the forces of injustice, selfishness and discrimination, and trying to do it through politics. Negroes all over the country bend their backs on their own to make the task easier. In the north, particularly, perhaps as great a proportion of resources available to solving civil rights problems is in the hands of white people as in the hands of Negroes. Yet the organization to political action (even non-politically must be stepped up by the Federal Government. Discrimination must be met in the North and South. Where threatened and actual withdrawal of Federal funds from segregated schools, hospitals, etc. And policemen must be punished for violation of people's Constitutional rights. This is the part the "rest of society" can play. In this way the blame can be alleviated. With groups like the H. P. A. shaping their own future and with the liberal and radical communities actively helping wherever they can, the changes necessary can be brought about as painlessly as possible.

by Junius Williams

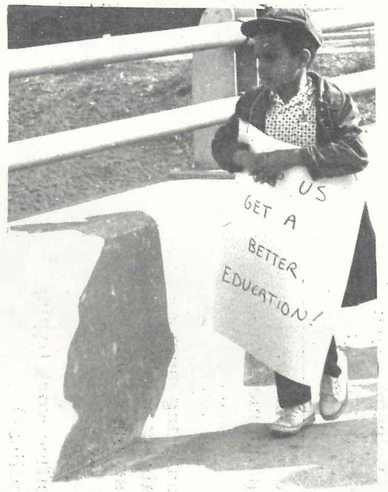
This PTA meeting had great importance in many ways. H. P. A. left it feeling that the City and CPI were far less agencies to help and serve them than they were agencies to control them. CPI officials had demanded that the parents work through them as the "proper authorities." H. P. A. answered that in one week they had wrought more progress at Prince than CPI had in its entire multi-million-dollar existence -- and they pointed to the repairmen suddenly so busy at Prince School. (It might be mentioned here that both school bathrooms were revamped and every class room was painted during the week following that PTA meeting.)

As one H. P. A. leader said: "CPI is here to give a few political friends good pay for work which amounts to helping the people a very little so as to prevent them from demanding a great deal more."

H. P. A. talked after that PTA meeting about the inadequacy of the "proper channels" for getting action. When they marched on City Hall the next day, Friday, April 22, accompanied by over 100 supporters from other schools and Yale students, they were eager to express their feeling that only such action remained to them to get a decent education for their children. They hoped it would be effective despite the amazing newspaper blackout on the march.

It was. By Thursday, a leave of absence had been arranged for Mr. O'Hara. Mr. George Harris, formerly assistant principal at the Bassett Jr. High School, was appointed by the Board to replace him.

The Prince School affair means much to the purpose and organization of our campaign. First, it was a prime example of people standing up against entrenched political interests to demand their MINIMUM rights -- educational services for their children. In doing so, they showed others as they showed themselves that most of the talk about poverty programs, CPI, and renewal is only talk, which serves to hide the reality, not to change it. They showed further what can be done if people organize and work together for better services, policies or institutions. They feel their strength, and speak increasingly of "how all these programs can't work by themselves against the power of politicians, landlords and all them -- we need power ourselves if things like decent education, housing and recreation are ever to win out over political expediency." Bob Cook and some of his campaign workers joined in the parents' march on City Hall. Communication, confidence and mutual support are growing between us. This should be only the first of many such mergers of unrepresented citizens with the American Independent Movement.



Prince School pupil leads march from school to Board of Education

PLEASE PASS AIM NEWSLETTER ON TO FRIENDS.

OPEN FORUM

ROBERT COOK and ROBERT ZELLNER

need for new politics

Thursday, May 12, 1966
Yale Law School Auditorium
8 P. M.
Sponsors:
Yale-New Haven Committee to End the War in Vietnam
Yale-New Haven Students for a Democratic Society

CIRCULATE PETITION

Since the Independent Political Action Committee is not entering a candidate in the conventions of the existing parties, it must circulate a petition to put Robert Cook on the ballot in November. This petition, which must be signed by at least one half of one per cent of the number of votes cast at the last Congressional election -- about 1000 signatures -- must be filed with the Secretary of State at least nine weeks before the election. Signers can withdraw their names any time up to ten weeks before the election by sending written notice to the candidate and to the Secretary of State.

The circulators of the petition must be voters of the town they live in; they must file with the Secretary of State, no later than six weeks before the election, statements by their town clerks that they are residents of their towns and eligible to vote for Congressional representative. Each page of the petition must have a statement by the circulator, under penalty of perjury, that the signatures on that page are authentic.

At least six weeks before the election, the candidate must file together with the petition a platform or statement of principles, if he is not running as the candidate of a party.

AIM

The COOK for CONGRESS CAMPAIGN Needs YOUR Help . . . NOW!

To defray the costs of AIM and mounting campaign expenses (for rent, office supplies, mailings, phone, etc.)

To purchase time and space for radio, TV, and newspaper advertising.

To bring Bob Cook's program to every citizen of the 3rd District.

Send today for Campaign membership cards. Volunteer your time and services for the Campaign.

Please send me a Cook for Congress Campaign membership card.

I enclose:

$1 ☐ Contributing member
$5 ☐ Sustaining member
$10 ☐ Sponsoring member

I volunteer to:

1. ☐ do office work (typing mimeo, mailings)
2. ☐ carry signature petitions
3. ☐ work on newsletter
4. ☐ do campaign research
5. ☐ other _____

Please put my name on the AIM mailing list. (Include your friends' names too!)

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